

F

455
S5W5

UC-NRLF



QB 725 644

A REVIEW

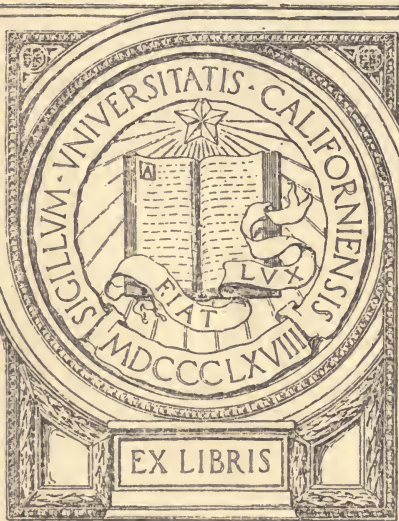
By SAMUEL M. WILSON

OF

“Isaac Shelby and the Genet Mission”

By Dr. Archibald Henderson

GIFT OF



EX LIBRIS

A REVIEW

By SAMUEL M. WILSON

OF

"Isaac Shelby and the Genet Mission"

By Dr. Archibald Henderson

Exitus acta probat

Lexington, Kentucky

1920

To Mr. W. W. Wilsrich
Amherst, Mass.

F455
S5W5

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2008 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

REVIEW

By SAMUEL M. WILSON

OF

An article, by Dr. Archibald Henderson, entitled "*Isaac Shelby and the Genet Mission*," published, first, in two chapters, in a volume by Dr. Henderson, entitled "The Star of Empire," and, later, as the leading article in No. 4, of Vol. VI, of the Mississippi Valley Historical Review, for March, 1920, pages 451-469.

"To the historian, destitute of facts for his text, silence supercedes commentary."—Humphrey Marshall, Hist. of Ky., 1812 Ed., page 9.

The chief fault the writer has to find with the article in question is with certain of its comments and conclusions or characterizations, and not with those facts narrated, which are based upon indisputable records. The quotation extracted from Marshall's History of Kentucky (Edition of 1812) bears more directly upon the errors and omissions of Marshall himself, which appear to have unconsciously influenced the author of the paper styled, "*Isaac Shelby and the Genet Mission*." These errors might have been avoided by Marshall and their effect on later historians, beginning with Timothy Pitkin, in 1828, and ending, let us say, with Roosevelt, Winsor, McElroy and Dr. Henderson, might have been minimized, if Marshall had adhered more scrupulously to the principle enunciated by him so tersely and so oracularly in the sentence quoted above. It was Macaulay, I believe, who long ago ventured the observation that egotism which is so offensive a fault in conversation, is oftentimes an alluring quality in written composition, and assuredly Humphrey Marshall's haughty self-assurance in his histories is responsible for much of the weight which those histories have had with later writers.

70 3041
AMERICAN
A REVIEW BY SAMUEL M. WILSON

By this I do not mean to deny that he is often picturesque, sometimes brilliant, and, nearly always, forceful and readable. But his facts were not always fairly or fully presented and his conclusions were too frequently warped and colored by his intense prejudices.

The paper here under consideration is, in my opinion, subject to criticism in that it does not reveal a very marked advance over the effort of such a writer, for example, as Dr. Robert McNutt McElroy, in the chapter entitled, "One Phase of the Genet Mission," published as Chapter VI, of his book, "Kentucky in the Nation's History."

Comparing this article by Dr. Henderson, as it first appeared in the book, "The Star of Empire," with its later form as it appeared in the Mississippi Valley Historical Review, one is led to surmise that McElroy may have influenced the changes or modifications which slightly differentiate the second version from the first version of this paper. However this may be, it is to be regretted that Dr. Henderson did not seize the opportunity presented to show how deficient is the narrative and how unjust and ill-founded are some of the comments which disfigure the work of McElroy. The case for Isaac Shelby might have been materially strengthened in the revised article but, instead of that, the case appears to be accentuated against him.

It is plainly evident that neither Dr. McElroy nor Dr. Henderson made any use of Michaux's Journal, a translation of which is found in Vol. III of Thwaite's "Early Western Travels," published in 1903, nor of the "Clark and Genet Correspondence," as published in the Report of the Historical Manuscripts Commission, of the American Historical Association in its Annual Report for 1896. McElroy (p. 169, note 2, and p. 170, notes 1 and 3), cites Michaux's Instructions and the Correspondence of the French Ministers of the United States, 1791-1797, published in 1903, in the Seventh Report of the Historical Mss. Com., of the American Historical Association, Vol. II (all in French and part of which had been previously published in 1896), but he seems to have been oblivious of the important matter contained in the Report published in

ISAAC SHELBY AND THE GENET MISSION

1896, and of other important source materials which could have been found with the slightest diligence. He pays not the slightest attention to "The Mangourit Correspondence in Respect to Genet's Attack upon the Floridas, 1793-94," edited by Frederick J. Turner, and published by the American Historical Association, in its report for 1897, pp. 290, 569-679, nor to the pamphlet, privately printed in 1899, by George Clinton Genet, entitled "Washington, Jefferson and Citizen Genet, 1793," nor to the valuable article by Frederick J. Turner, entitled "The Origin of Genet's Projected Attack on Louisiana and the Floridas," published in 1898, in No. 4 of Vol. III of the American Hist. Review, pp. 490-650, nor to C. DeWitt's Life of Thomas Jefferson, published in Paris in 1861, nor to a lot of other interesting authorities, which have been ignored or thrown into the discard. McElroy cites Butler's History of Kentucky, 2d Ed. of 1836, in his Bibliography, but he manifests very little acquaintance with it. His citations of Butler appear to refer to the 1st Edition of 1834, which, on this particular subject, is not so satisfactory as the 1836 edition. Use is made by Dr. Henderson of a portion of the valuable documents published as Appendices to Butler's History of Kentucky, 2d Ed., but little or no account has, apparently, been taken of Butler's text, dealing with the same subject. (See, particularly, pp. 222-235.) The following sentence from Butler (p. 227) will illustrate the studied unfairness of Shelby's political adversary, Humphrey Marshall: "These (views) historical justice, no less than the author's deep respect for the great public services of Governor Shelby, impels him to record. He is more eager to do this, because this defense, though in part produced by a motion of Mr. H. Marshall, is totally omitted by him in his History." (Marshall had introduced the Resolution of November 12, 1794, in the Ky. Legislative Session of November, 1794, which called forth the Governor's message of the 15th November, 1794, to the House of Representatives of Kentucky.)

The Clark and Genet Correspondence (Am. Hist. Assoc. Report, 1896), was collected and edited by the Historical Manuscripts Commission of the American Historical Associa-

tion, and that Commission was composed of four leading historians of the country, two of whom were J. Franklin Jameson and Frederick J. Turner. It is fairly evident that the actual work was done by Frederick J. Turner. In his Introduction to the correspondence, Turner (at page 934) uses this language: "These documents seem to support Shelby's explanation." This is in accord with the conclusions reached by Mann Butler, sixty years before, and is the conclusion which most commends itself to the impartial investigator today.

The Correspondence of Clark and Genet tends to show that the idea of an armed expedition down the Mississippi against the Spanish possessions did not originate with Genet but with those who sent Genet to America and with George Rogers Clark himself, who, as early as February 2 and February 5, 1793, was addressing letters on the subject to the "French Minister" to the United States. McElroy, in a casual sort of way (p. 170), alludes to this possibility, saying, "*It seems probable that Clark suggested the whole scheme*, and that Jefferson, the Secretary of State, deliberately encouraged it." He, nevertheless, exerts himself to "whitewash" Clark, with all the zeal of a special pleader. However this may be, it is plain that Clark was keen for the adventure, just as he had, in former years, been avid for employment by Spain, and lent himself to the reciprocal overtures of Genet, Michaux and other emissaries of the French with the utmost readiness and willingness.

After Genet and Clark, the central figure in the affair was no less a person than Thomas Jefferson, at that time Secretary of State of the United States. Alexander Johnston, the able expounder of American History, who, until his untimely death, occupied the chair of History at Princeton University, has said:

"The most ambiguous position in regard to the whole affair of Genet and his mission is that of Jefferson."
(Lalor's Cyc. of Political Science.)

Von Holst, in his Constitutional and Political History of the United States, Vol. I, p. 116, says that Jefferson so far hindered the action of the government as to justify the charge that "he

ISAAC SHELBY AND THE GENET MISSION

played a masked part, and valued the friendship of France more than the honor of his own country." Based upon Genet's dispatch of July 25, 1793, to the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, Von Holst charges that Jefferson "indirectly, but with a knowledge of Genet's plan, advocated that an uprising against Spanish rule in Louisiana, with the aid of the Kentuckians, should be provoked." Genet had written home:

"Mr. Jefferson me parut sentir vivement l'utilité de ce projet; * * * cependant il me fit entendre qu'il pensait qu'une petite irruption spontanée des habitans de Kentukey dans la Nouvelle-Orleans pouvait avancer les choses; il me mit en rélation avec plusieurs députés du Kentukey, et notamment avec Mr. Brown."

In spite of all this, it is only fair to say that Johnston endeavors to exonerate Jefferson, and as an admirer of Jefferson, I have no quarrel with his vindication. The sense of nationality was as yet but embryonic not only with John Brown, John Breckinridge, Isaac Shelby, and others of Kentucky, but with George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Henry Lee, and others of Virginia, as will be more distinctly shown before this review is ended. Respecting Washington's Proclamation of 'Neutrality,' of April 22, 1793, (which nowhere uses the word "neutrality"), James Madison wrote to Jefferson, under date of June 19, 1793: "The proclamation was in truth a most unfortunate error. It wounds the national honor, by seeming to disregard the stipulated duties to France. It wounds the popular feelings by a seeming indifference to the cause of liberty." (Rives, *Life and Times of James Madison*, Vol. III, pp. 334-335.) (See, also, the letters, signed 'Helvidius,' written by Madison, in answer to a series of letters by Hamilton, signed 'Pacificus'.)

Let me pause here to say that Genet, at heart, was not a bad man. It is established by documentary evidence, says Von Holst (Vol. I, p. 117, note 2), "that Genet received express instructions to involve the United States in the war." "His virtues," says James Parton, in an interesting article, entitled, "The Exploits of Edmond Genet in the United States," published in the *Atlantic Monthly*, for April, 1873, (Vol. XXXI,

A REVIEW BY SAMUEL M. WILSON

pp. 385-405), at page 403, "were his own; his errors were those of the time in which he was called upon to act." Allowing for the difference in time and popular sentiment, his conduct was quite as decent and as considerate as that of Von Bernstorff, prior to his expulsion from the United States, in 1917. A grandson of Genet, by the way, is said to have graduated from the United States Military Academy, at West Point, and to have served in the United States Army, and another descendant was killed in the World War. Parton opens his article, mentioned above, with this striking paragraph:

"It seemed an odd freak of destiny that sent Edmond Genet, a *protégé* of Marie Antoinette, to represent the Republic of France in the United States. Gouverneur Morris, in his neat, uncompromising manner, sums up this young diplomat, aged twenty-eight, in 1793, as 'a man of good parts and very good education, brother to the queen's first woman, from whence his fortune originates.' Even so. He was a brother of that worthy and capable Madame Campan, first *femme de chambre* to Marie Antoinette, and, after the queen's death, renowned through Europe as the head of a seminary for young ladies in Paris. It was she who wrote a hundred circulars with her own hand because she had not money to get them printed, and received sixty pupils the first year,—Hortense, ere long, from Napoleon's own hand."

It seems to me that the article under review does not sufficiently bring out the relation of Genet to Michaux and of Jefferson to both of these men, before Governor Shelby was ever approached on the subject of an expedition "down the river." It was Jefferson who, at the instance of Genet, gave to André Michaux a letter of introduction to Shelby, fully accrediting Michaux, not only as a botanist and man of science, but as the trusted political friend of Genet, the French Minister. When Jefferson did this, he knew that Michaux was the confidential agent of Genet. He could not fail to realize that the tendency of his letter of introduction would be to throw Governor Shelby off his guard and lull him into a sense of security so far as Genet and Michaux, and their subordinates, were concerned. Genet operated on Depauw (not *Depeau* nor

ISAAC SHELBY AND THE GENET MISSION

Delpeau), LaChaise, Mathurin, and Gignoux (or PisGignoux), *through Michaux*, and therefore, Governor Shelby's bearing and demeanor toward Depauw and LaChaise can only be properly understood by taking into account the fact that the way for their reception had been paved by Michaux, who called upon Governor Shelby, armed with flattering letters of introduction from Thomas Jefferson and John Brown, the latter then at Philadelphia as U. S. Senator from Kentucky.

At the same time, it is fairly apparent from Michaux's Journal that he did not make much headway with Governor Shelby, respecting the political aspects of his visit to Kentucky, for he fails to record any expression or utterance of Shelby's which betokens approval of or sympathy for the proposed expedition. He called to see Governor Shelby two or three times, once before and once or twice after, the enterprise had collapsed, but on no occasion does he represent the Governor as falling in with the plans of Clark and Genet. The contrary is true as to General Ben Logan, George Rogers Clark, Henry Lee (of Mason County, cousin of General Henry Lee, Governor of Virginia), Alexander D. Orr (at that time a Representative in Congress from Kentucky), Thomas Barbee, and others, and, in a qualified way, as to Col. George Nicholas. Read Michaux's Journal and judge for yourself. My personal opinion is that Shelby's transparent honesty and integrity repelled Michaux and it may be doubted whether he ever directly broached to Shelby the subject of a warlike expedition down the Mississippi, to be sponsored by responsible citizens of Kentucky. Shelby's attitude, moreover, taken at its worst, was simply symptomatic of a condition that existed all over the country and was by no means limited to Kentucky or the Southwest. In the Presidential election of 1792, Kentucky's four electoral votes were cast for Jefferson. Of the *fourteen* (14) delegates who represented the Kentucky District in the Virginia Convention of 1788, only three (3), one of whom was Humphrey Marshall, acting contrary to the known will of his constituents, voted in favor of ratifying the Federal Constitution. Marshall, by the way, had been denied membership in the Danville Political Club in 1787, five members voting in the

A REVIEW BY SAMUEL M. WILSON

negative on the motion to elect him. John Breckinridge, President of the Lexington Democratic Society, in 1793, and, after December 19, 1793, Attorney General of Kentucky, and, thereby, the official legal adviser of Governor Shelby, five years later became the proponent, in the Kentucky Legislature, of Jefferson's "Kentucky Resolutions of 1798." Humphrey Marshall defeated him for the U. S. Senatorship in 1795 but, in 1801, Breckinridge turned the tables on him and, in 1805, passed from the Senate to the post of Attorney-General in Jefferson's Cabinet. He was Jefferson's right-hand man in the movement to acquire Louisiana. John Brown had been a student in Jefferson's law office in Virginia, and these and other ties greatly complicated the situation in Kentucky. The affair with Genet was not a detached episode but an event inextricably caught in the intricate web of state and national politics.

But insofar as Isaac Shelby is concerned, the point of the whole matter is, not that he knew of the scheme, but that he knew, or, at least, felt morally certain, that it would fail. The evidence on this point leaves no room for reasonable doubt, and, as Frederick J. Turner has expressed it, "supports Shelby's explanation" of November 15, 1794, and of July 1, 1812. It requires no assumption of senility to excuse his vigorous and convincing statement of the latter date. The remark to which Dr. Henderson has given place in his article that "There seems to be no doubt that Shelby has clearly fallen into error, *after the lapse of years,*" etc., not only does Governor Shelby an injustice in its implication of a failing or untrustworthy memory (a favorite fling of Roosevelt's), but it is out of harmony with the evidence. More than a year after the letter of July 1, 1812, was written by Governor Shelby to Martin D. Hardin, the Governor of Kentucky had strength and vigor, both mental and physical, sufficient to assemble, command and lead four thousand Kentucky volunteers to victory in Upper Canada. Hold him responsible for whatever faults or mistakes he may fairly be chargeable with, but don't try to excuse him by making him out a dotard.

The remark last referred to warns the reader that Governor

ISAAC SHELBY AND THE GENET MISSION

Shelby *has clearly fallen into error, after the lapse of years*, "in his assertion that on January 13, 1794, he *was assured* of the failure of the Franco-American expedition against Louisiana—*unless, indeed, he possessed a prophetic vision*, based on reliable sources of 'inside information' available to but few." Shelby does not say that he "*was assured*" of the failure but that he "saw evidently that the whole scheme of Lachaise would fall to the ground without any interference." (Lachaise was so hard up that he tried to borrow money from Shelby and a loan was refused.—See Am. Hist. Assoc. Report, 1896, pp. 1105-1106.) Again, Dr. Henderson remarks, "*It is difficult to understand*, looking at the events after the lapse of a century and a quarter, *how Shelby could have had access to sources of information so positive*, to the effect that the French enterprise would not even be attempted." Why is this so difficult? Shelby was on the ground; he had been one of the earliest pioneers to Kentucky; he had been continuously a resident of the State for ten years; he not only knew but was known by his contemporaries in Kentucky as few other men of his time were, and he was believed in and trusted by the vast majority of his fellow-citizens. Much of his correspondence and papers of that period has been lost but enough for that and later times remains to show that he was advised and consulted about public affairs by practically every man of consequence in Kentucky. As Governor of Kentucky, he came into frequent contact, either at his home, "Traveller's Rest," near Knob Lick, or at the Executive Mansion, in Frankfort (in later years commonly called the "Palace"), with all the prominent people in Kentucky. One of the first acts of his first administration was to commission all of the Militia officers of the State, practically all of whom were personally known to him. (See Ms. Exec. Journal, 1792-1796.) He knew that George Rogers Clark had "fallen from grace" and, to a large extent, had lost his influence years before Genet and Michaux and their subordinates appeared upon the scene. He knew that Clark was "broke" and was "sore" on the government; he could easily have learned from Logan and Nicholas, his neighbors, and from John Breckinridge, John Bradford, Robert Pat-

A REVIEW BY SAMUEL M. WILSON

terson, Levi Todd and Thomas Todd, and others in Lexington, how sorely in need of funds were the advocates and promoters of the proposed filibuster, and he had had abundant military experience of his own to satisfy him that, without adequate funds, the expedition must inevitably "fall to the ground." In these circumstances, and others, which may be readily imagined, it did not require "prophetic vision" to forecast the fiasco which did, in fact, come to pass.

The population of Kentucky, at the time this project was being agitated, was close to a hundred thousand (100,000), with approximately fifteen to twenty thousand fighting men available for service, in an emergency. How many of these did Clark and his handful of noisy associates actually muster? McElroy (p. 171) asserts that "Clark's fame, together with these glittering promises, *induced many to volunteer for the expedition*, * * * confident that Clark would engage in no enterprise which he believed to be contrary to the best interests of his State and country." "Many" is, of course, a relative term, but the glib historian has certainly "drawn a long bow" as to the number of recruits, and the public confidence in Clark, at that time, is painted in brighter colors than the cold, unvarnished facts will justify. For he marshalled not exceeding *two hundred* (200) at the outside, barely enough for a modern Company, at full strength, or for what, in those days, would have passed for a "battalion." (See Am. Hist. Assoc. Report for 1896, p. 932.) The "*two thousand* brave Kentuckians" mentioned by Auguste Lachaise (whom I am tempted to call a "four-flusher"), in his swan-song letter of May 14, 1794, to the Democratic Society of Lexington, existed only on paper or in the fervid imagination of the sanguine Creole. They had no more real substance than Falstaff's "rogues in buckram," whose numbers grew with repeated telling and the seeming exigencies of his embarrassed predicament. Roosevelt (Winning of the West, Part VI, Chapter II), says: "No overt act of hostility was committed by Clark's people, except by some of those who started to join him *from the Cumberland district*, under the lead of a man named Montgomery." Also, says Roosevelt, "His (i. e. Clark's) agents gathered flat-boats and

ISAAC SHELBY AND THE GENET MISSION

pirogues for the troops and laid in stores of powder, lead and beef. The nature of some of the provisions shows what a characteristic backwoods expedition it was; for Clark's agent (John Montgomery) notified him that he had ready (at what is now Clarksville, Tennessee), 'upwards of eleven hundred weight of Bear Meat and about seventy or seventy-four pair of Veneson Hams.' " And, again, "Some of the Cumberland people, becoming excited by the news of Clark's preparation, prepared to join him, or to undertake a separate filibustering attack on their own account." *Only twenty-one* (21) "free-booters" actually reported for duty at the mouth of Cumberland River, "allotted as the place of Rendezvous." (See Penna. Gazette, June 4, 1794, and Am. Hist. Assoc. Rep. 1896, p. 1063.) All of this happened, it will be observed, outside of and south of Kentucky. William Blount, Federal Governor of the "Territory South of the Ohio" (now Tennessee), interposed to arrest the unlawful enterprise, and what men of sober-minded common sense thought of the wild scheme is well expressed by Thomas Portell, Commandant at New Madrid, in a letter of January 17, 1794, to Gen. James Robertson. Said Portell:

"I have never doubted but that the thinking people of Kentucky and Cumberland would discountenance any measure that tended to a breach of that happy harmony and good understanding that subsist between the two nations" (i. e. Spain and the United States). See Am. Hist. Assoc. Report, 1896, p. 1035.

Dr. Henderson's argument against what he is pleased to call "prophetic vision" by Isaac Shelby, at the time the letter from Shelby to Jefferson, of January 13, 1794, was written, and his charge that, in 1812, "Governor Shelby has clearly fallen into error," is based on the alleged fact that "at this very time (i. e. January 13, 1794), General George Rogers Clark *was extensively circulating throughout Kentucky* his 'Proposals for raising the volunteers, &c.' " Just what authority there is for this assertion, that Clark's "Proposals" were being "extensively circulated throughout Kentucky," I am not at this moment aware.

Certain it is that Clark realized the need of circumspection,

A REVIEW BY SAMUEL M. WILSON

for, in writing to Genet from Louisville, under date of October 3, 1793, he had said:

"I find that I shall have to be very circumspect in my conduct while in this cuntry and guard against doing any thing that would injure the U States or giving offence to their Govt., but in a few days after seting sail we shall be out of their Govermet I shall then be at liberty to give full scope to the authority of the Commission you did me the Honour to send." (Am. Hist. Assoc. Report, 1896, Vol. I, p. 1008.)

Dr. Henderson proceeds with the further statement that these "Proposals" were "so favorably received by the public, *that* they were actually set forth, in full, in the *Centinel of the North-Western Territory*, Cincinnati, January 25, 1794." The logic of this proposition is not very obvious. I can't see that their publication in a newspaper north of the Ohio River and within the jurisdiction of General Arthur St. Clair, Federal Governor of that territory, points to a "favorable reception" in Kentucky. There is no evidence, that I know of, that they had ever appeared in any public print anywhere in Kentucky prior to their publication in the "*Centinel of the North-West*." Furthermore, this publication in the "*Centinel*" was *twelve days AFTER* Shelby had dispatched his letter to Jefferson, Secretary of State. Continuing, Dr. Henderson informs the reader that "*contrary to Shelby's statement, quoted above, it appears certain,*" etc., and the projectors of the enterprise "*were so emboldened by the favorable sentiment in Kentucky that Lachaise and Depeau had the temerity to address the Governor on the subject, and General Clark sent forth openly and broadcast his 'Proposals,' etc., which doubtless were read by Governor Shelby.*" This is, to some extent, reversing the order of events. Shelby's "statement" to General Wayne bears date February 10, 1794, some two months and a half *after* LaChaise and DePauw had written him from Knob Lick, on November 25, 1793, (on which date the Governor appears to have been at the seat of Government, in Frankfort, the Legislature being then in session). The question is, what was Governor Shelby's "estimate of the situation," (to use a modern

ISAAC SHELBY AND THE GENET MISSION

military phrase), on January 13, 1794, and, again, on February 10, 1794, and not what may have been the mood of the "projectors of the enterprise" in the end of the preceding November. Dr. Henderson then adds, "*As a matter of fact*, the text of the 'Proposals' was printed at Lexington in the *Kentucky Gazette* six days prior to the date of Shelby's letter to Wayne," i. e., February 4th, 1794 (really on February 8th, 1794, only two days prior to the date of that letter). But, leaving out of view the fact that the First Amendment to the Federal Constitution and Section 7 of Article XII (the Bill of Rights) of the First Constitution of Kentucky, were then in full operation, guaranteeing freedom of speech and of the press, we invite attention to the fact that there was no publication of these "Proposals" in the "Kentucky Gazette" until they had first appeared in the "Centinel of the North-West," and it is shown in the *Gazette* that they had been *copied* from the "*Centinel*." If the Federal Governor of the Northwest Territory would tolerate their publication in a newspaper within his jurisdiction, why might not an editor in the State of Kentucky reprint them with impunity? For John Bradford (a sketch of whose eventful life I have now in preparation), this much must be said in vindication of his substantial loyalty to the Federal Government, his respect for the Government of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, and his essential conservatism (not unlike that of Col. George Nicholas), toward this business, with which he undoubtedly sympathized, that in December, 1793, as shown by a letter of December 19, 1793, written by him from Lexington to M. Chas. DePauw, at Knob Lick, he had informed DePauw that so much of his "Address to the Inhabitants of Louisiana" as declared "That the Republicans of the Western Country are ready (to go down) the Ohio and Mississippi," "*is inadmissible into the Kentucky Gazette.*" To this, Bradford, a warm personal friend of Shelby's, added: "*I think if it was to be published, it would excite opposition in the Executive of this State to the measure.*" How could it have been supposed by Bradford, a close friend of Gov. Shelby, that the latter would "oppose" "the measure," if some such intimation had not been conveyed to him from Governor

Shelby himself or if, as is now asserted, Governor Shelby was "in hearty sympathy with the movement?" (For Bradford's letter, see Report of Am. Hist. Assoc. for 1896, pp. 1023-1024.) And if such unanimity of sentiment favorable to the enterprise existed in Kentucky (as has been represented), why should Bradford have hesitated to print anything DePauw offered or anything he pleased about it? There was not only a "Spanish party," but a formidable Federal element, or, perhaps, it would be more accurate to say, a strongly conservative element in Kentucky, as well as the party of "French Democrats." In this connection, may I be allowed to say that I do not think the facts warrant the statement of Dr. Henderson that Governor Shelby "*vehemently takes sides* and frankly serves notice on Jefferson that personally and individually, as a representative of sentiment among the inhabitants on the 'western waters,' he (Shelby) *is in hearty sympathy with George Rogers Clark and with the movement*, engineered by Genet, which Clark is preparing to head." I do not think Shelby's letter of January 13, 1794, is fairly susceptible of any such interpretation. I do not think the facts by any means warrant the assumption that he was "in hearty sympathy with George Rogers Clark and with the movement." This letter of January 13, 1794, manifests acute irritation, on the part of the Governor, but its language is frank and its meaning unmistakable. Whatever mental reservations the astute Secretary of State (Jefferson) may have had, when he wrote his two letters of August 29th, 1793, and November 6th, 1793, this much, at least, may be said for Governor Shelby, that he had nothing to conceal and was absolutely candid. As Parton has remarked, in his "Exploits of Edmond Genet," in reference to a paroxysm of rage which one day got the better of Washington, "Happy the mortal who has no worse fault than a rare outburst of legitimate and harmless anger!"

Let us follow Shelby's course, as disclosed by the evidence, and see if there was any sufficient ground for distrusting his fidelity to the Federal government. In his letter of October 5, 1793, to Jefferson, written nearly a month after Michaux had called upon him (Sept. 13, 1793), with a letter of intro-

ISAAC SHELBY AND THE GENET MISSION

duction from Jefferson, dated June 28th, 1793, and, of course, after the arrival of Jefferson's official letter of date, August 29th, 1793, Shelby said:

"I shall be particularly attentive to prevent any attempts of that nature from this country. I am well persuaded, at present, none such is in contemplation in this place. The citizens of Kentucky possess too just a sense of the obligations they owe the general government, to embark in any enterprise that would be so injurious to the United States."

What was the state of affairs at the time this letter was written? Shelby had come into contact only with Michaux, "a man of unusual intelligence." When Michaux called upon General Ben. Logan (a neighbor and friend of Shelby's), on September 11th, 1793, two days before his first visit to Shelby, at "Traveller's Rest," he found that the project was looked upon as in abeyance. Says Michaux (*Early Western Travels*, Vol. III, pp. 39-40):

"I confided to him (Logan) the Commission entrusted to me. He told me he would be delighted to take part in the enterprise but that he had received a letter a few days previously from J. Brown, which informed him that negotiations had been begun between the United States and the Spaniards respecting the navigation of the Mississippi, and the Creek Indians; That a messenger had been sent to Madrid and that any one of the United States that would venture to act in a hostile manner against the Spaniards *before the return of the first of December next*, would be disapproved by the federal Government."

Logan was a straightforward, simple-hearted, guileless kind of a man, and he evidently took this advice of Brown's literally, for, under date of *December 31st, 1793*, we find him "*once more offering his feeble aid*" to Clark. (*Am. Hist. Assoc. Rep.*, 1896, p. 1026.)

Continuing, Michaux related (*Early Western Travels*, Vol. III, p. 42):

"The 17th of September (1793) visited General Clarke. I handed him the Letters from the Minister and informed him of the object of my Mission. He told me that he was

A REVIEW BY SAMUEL M. WILSON

very eager for the Undertaking but that, although he had written so long ago (*Feb. 2 and 5, 1793*), he had received no answer *and thought it had been abandoned*. I told him that his letter had fallen into other hands and that the Minister had received it only indirectly after his arrival in Philadelphia. *He informed me that a fresh circumstance seemed to oppose an obstacle to it."*

Is it strange, with Clark and Logan, the two principal confederates in the contemplated expedition in Kentucky, both regarding the project as in suspense or abandoned, that the Governor of Kentucky, a little more than two weeks later, should have written Jefferson as he did?

On September 28th, 1793, two weeks after Michaux's visit and one week before Shelby made his first reply to Jefferson, Governor Shelby, at the instance of the national government, ordered a draft of troops in aid of Wayne, in his pending campaign against the Indians north of the Ohio, and this draft was entirely successful. On October 24th, 1793, Major-General Charles Scott, of Kentucky, with one thousand (1,000) mounted Kentuckians, joined General Wayne six miles north of Fort Jefferson and eighty miles north of Cincinnati. (Collins, Hist. of Ky., Vol. I, p. 23.) These reinforcements entered the service of the General Government.

In the light of the evidence, I submit that Shelby's letter of October 5, 1793, to Jefferson contained an absolutely fair statement of the situation, as it then existed.

More correspondence ensued, and then Shelby, on February 10, 1794 (barely a month after his letter of January 13, 1794, to Jefferson), wrote General Anthony Wayne, among other things, as follows:

"I can assure you that there is not the smallest probability that such an enterprise will be attempted; if it should, the Militia of this State, I am fully persuaded, are able and willing to suppress every attempt that can be made here to violate the laws of the Union."

There are two statements in this extract which invite consideration: (1st) the improbability of the filibuster ever materializing; (2nd) the ability and willingness of the mili-

ISAAC SHELBY AND THE GENET MISSION

tary forces of Kentucky to repress it; and, we think the sequel will show, these statements demonstrate that Isaac Shelby was endowed with common sense, common honesty, and sound judgment, if not gifted with "prophetic vision."

Shelby's official legal adviser, until December 19th, 1793, was not, primarily, James Brown, Secretary of State, but William Murray, Attorney-General of Kentucky, in succession to Col. George Nicholas, who had resigned shortly after his appointment on June 15, 1792, upon the establishment of the State government. John Breckinridge, an outspoken "Republican," was, on December 19, 1793, appointed Attorney-General to succeed Murray, a staunch "Federalist" (who had served a little more than a year), and there is reason to believe that Breckinridge, rather than Brown, advised the Governor respecting the legal aspects of the case, which are canvassed by Governor Shelby in his letter to Jefferson of January 13, 1794. Breckinridge, like Senator John Brown, had been a friend and (in a sense) a *protégé* of Jefferson in Virginia, and, as I have pointed out above, after serving as U. S. Senator from Kentucky, was Attorney-General of the United States, in the cabinet of Jefferson, during a part of Jefferson's second term. He was a young man, when he came to Kentucky in 1793, but was recognized at once as one of the ablest lawyers in the West. The advice he gave Shelby was, from a legal standpoint, sound, as subsequent events proved. His elder half-brother, Robert Breckinridge, who lived in or near Louisville, in Jefferson County, was the first Speaker of the House of Representatives of Kentucky, and a man of property, sense and influence. Robert Breckinridge was one of *three* only of Kentucky's *fourteen* delegates to the Virginia Convention of 1788, to vote in favor of the ratification of the Federal Constitution, and may reasonably be counted a "Federalist." He held the office of Speaker at the time he wrote to Governor Shelby the letter, now to be considered. He was also a Brigadier-General in the State Militia. This letter, bearing date 10th January, 1794, *three days before* the letter from Shelby to Jefferson, and just a month ahead of Shelby's letter to General Wayne, will be

A REVIEW BY SAMUEL M. WILSON

found in its entirety in the Am. Hist. Assoc. Report for 1896, at pp. 1032-1033. I quote from it as follows:

"We have nothing new in this quarter except that there is some little stir relative to the intended expedition against the Spanish Settlements on the Mississippi—A young man of this county, communicated a writing to me, the other day, on that subject without signature. It began with 'Geo. R. Clark Esqr. Majr Genl in the Armies of France and Commander in Chief of the French Army on the Mississippi,' and proceeded to instructions for recruiting men destined for that Service. This pompous title raises the expectations considerably, but when contrasted with the unhappy situation of the leader, and some French men about him, every idea of carrying the scheme into execution droops.—I sincerely wish the French Republic success, but if that nation have any hopes, or our General Government any fears, from this interprize, both will be disappointed, in my opinion.

"A proclamation of St Clairs appeared at the Falls the other day forbidding *the Citizens of the United States, North West of the Ohio*, from engaging with Certain French men in that expedition, or committing any other act which might involve the United States in a war with the Spaniards, and to observe a strict neutrality towards all belligerent powers."

It is not unlikely that this letter is but one of a number of similar tenor received by Governor Shelby from leading citizens throughout the State. Taken alone, it speaks for itself and is sufficient for the purpose.

But let us here place by the side of it some extracts from the letter of February 16, 1794, from Shelby's distinguished Secretary of State, James Brown:

"The information which has reached me *since the date of my last letter*," wrote Brown to Shelby, "has induced me to accord with you in the opinion as to the result of that enterprise; and has fully convinced me that nothing less than a considerable supply of money will enable the promoters of it to effectuate their intentions. I therefore clearly concur with you in the sentiment, that it would be, at present, *unnecessary* to take any active measures in the business; and if *unnecessary*, it would certainly be *impolitic* to exercise powers of so questionable a nature as those

ISAAC SHELBY AND THE GENET MISSION

which the General Government have adopted, and now wish you to exert.

"Indeed it appears to me that good policy will justify the Executive of this country, in discovering a certain degree of unwillingness to oppose the progress of an enterprise, which has for its object the free navigation of the Mississippi. * * * These representations could not be made to government at a more favorable juncture. Mortified at finding, etc., * * * they may be alarmed at the idea of our detaching ourselves from the Union at so critical a period. I am therefore happy that, whilst you have expressed your devotion to the laws and constitution of the Union, you have reminded the government of what is due to us as a State, and that power ought not to be assumed for the punishment of those whose object is to do what government ought long ago have done for us." (Butler's Hist. of Ky., Ed. 1836, pp. 229-230; and Amer. Hist. Assoc. Rep., 1896, pp. 1040-1041.)

Among other documents transmitted to Congress by the President, with his Special Message of May 20th, 1794, was a Memorandum, doubtless furnished him either by St. Clair or Wayne, from which I make the following quotations:

"Mr. John S. Gano, of Cincinnati, North West Territory, came through Kentucky, was at Lexington and Frankfort six days, and left Lexington on the 8th or 9th of April (1794).

"He says, that the expedition of General Clarke, to open the free navigation of the Mississippi, *which had been suspended apparently for want of money*, had again revived, and it was said owing to a supply of money which had arrived by a Frenchman, said to be a major, but whose name the informant does not recollect. * * *

"That the measure of the expedition was openly advocated, and not opposed by any considerable numbers, but some did speak against it. That the President's proclamation had been received in Cincinnati, but he did not see any of them in Kentucky." (Am. State Papers, 2d Ed. Vol. 2, pp. 53-54.)

This paper is of interest here as showing that an impression prevailed that the expedition "*had been suspended, apparently for want of money.*" It will become of interest again, when we come to consider the President's Message of May

A REVIEW BY SAMUEL M. WILSON

20th, 1794, and the letter from the Secretary of War to Governor Shelby of May 16th, 1794.

Governor Shelby not only gave explicit assurance of his loyal attitude in his letter of October 5, 1793, to Jefferson, but in his reply to DePauw, from Frankfort, on November 28, 1793, he gives DePauw explicitly to understand that he will carry out the instructions received from the Federal authorities at Philadelphia. He recites the substance of these instructions and then curtly tells his ingratiating correspondent that to this charge "I *must* pay that attention which my present situation obliges me." This is no more nor less than what he said, in a few more words, in the concluding paragraph of his letter of January 13th, 1794, to Jefferson, viz:

"But whatever may be my private opinion, as a man, as a friend to liberty, an American citizen, and an inhabitant of the Western Waters, *I shall at all times hold it as my duty* to perform whatever may be constitutionally required of me as Governor of Kentucky, by the President of the United States." (Am. State Papers, 2d Ed. Vol. 2, pp. 38-40.)

Nor is his language to General Wayne, in his letter of February 10, 1794, out of harmony with this. Let us read this language again:

"I can assure you that there is not the smallest probability that such an enterprise will be attempted; if it should, the Militia of this State, I am fully persuaded, are able and willing to suppress every attempt that can be made here to violate the laws of the Union. (Butler, Hist. of Ky., 2d Ed., App. p. 524.)

What was the position and predilection of the Kentucky militia and of the great mass of the veterans of the Revolutionary War, then in Kentucky?

This question may be answered, in part, by reference to the letter of July 5th, 1794, from Major William Price to Governor Shelby, which will be found at page 150 of the 1913 Year Book of the Kentucky Society of Sons of the Revolution. (Major Price, under General Scott, joined Wayne on July 26th, 1794.) It is even more positively answered by the historical fact that

ISAAC SHELBY AND THE GENET MISSION

in the preceding September, in response to Governor Shelby's order for a draft, one thousand (1,000) Kentucky riflemen had cheerfully rallied around General Charles Scott and marched with him to join Wayne eighty miles north of Cincinnati, where they arrived on October 24th, 1793. The season being too far advanced to admit of an offensive campaign, these men returned home and were back in Kentucky, when Shelby wrote to Wayne, on February 10, 1794. (Collins, Hist. of Ky., Vol. I, p. 23.) The question is even more emphatically answered by the historical fact that, in the month of May, 1794, when General Henry Knox, Secretary of War, speaking in the name of the President, called on Kentucky for reinforcements to help Wayne in his memorable campaign of that year against the Northwestern tribes, some sixteen hundred (1600) mounted *volunteers* from Kentucky, under Major-General Charles Scott, whose loyalty nobody ever dared to question, and officered in part by Brigadier-Generals Thomas Barbee and Robert Todd (both of whom had apparently lent a friendly countenance to the French intrigue), responded with alacrity to this appeal, and this formidable force (equal in number to the "regulars" under Wayne), rendered most effective aid in winning the decisive battle of the Fallen Timber. Contrast this prompt response of the patriotic sons of Kentucky with the miserable showing made by Clark and his confederates in their efforts to raise a hostile band against the Spanish possessions in Louisiana, and what must be the inference?

When the French enterprise was first brought to Shelby's attention, the Commonwealth of Kentucky was barely a year old; the Federal government was but a little over four years old and by many still regarded as an experiment; and, as Frederick Jackson Turner well says, in reference to the Genet program: "*The details of its inception and progress reveal the inchoate condition of national feeling in the West.*" He might, with truth, have added that "national feeling" was scarcely less inchoate in the East, as will presently be shown.

Before I leave the subject of the justification for Governor Shelby's confidence that the Clark-Genet expedition must end in failure, let me call attention to the "fallen estate" of that

A REVIEW BY SAMUEL M. WILSON

one time military hero and popular idol, George Rogers Clark. It has been seen what was thought of him by a neighbor and contemporary, Robert Breckinridge, writing Governor Shelby on January 10th, 1794. Here is what his admirer and eulogist, Humphrey Marshall, had to say of him, in reference to his condition in 1786:

"General Wilkinson, who was at the Falls of the Ohio, wrote to a friend in Fayette, 'that the sun of General Clarke's military glory was set, never more to rise.' There was much meaning in this sentence, which those who had fathomed Wilkinson knew how to interpret, and appreciate.

"Rumors were indeed unfavorable to General Clark. But those rumors were set afloat by his enemies, who wanted an apology for their own conduct; and who, in their turn, were accused of fomenting the insubordination of which they availed themselves to terminate the campaign.

"Candour, however, extorts a confession, which is made with regret, that General Clark, at this time, 'was not the man he had been.' A high sense of injustice, and a mind corroded by chagrin, had been left with General Clark by the government, whose territory he had enlarged, and whose reputation he had raised to renown; which in the ennue and mortification, incident to a state of inaction, had saught extingishment, or oblivion, in the free use of ardent spirits.

"He was accused, with too much truth, for his fame, with frequent intoxication; even in his camp." (Marshall's Hist. of Ky., 1812 Ed., pp. 291-292.)

When Governor Shelby became a candidate for Governor of Kentucky, in 1812, Volume I of Humphrey Marshall's History of Kentucky was all that had been published. This volume only brings the history of the Commonwealth down to the year 1791, and, of course, the story of the machinations of Genet, in 1793 and 1794, is not developed. In this first edition of Marshall's History, the author says just as little about Isaac Shelby as it was possible to say; whereas he devotes pages to Benjamin Logan and George Rogers Clark and others of less fame. As to Clark, see, for example, pages 94, 97. Yet, as Marshall is forced to admit, seven years before Genet began

ISAAC SHELBY AND THE GENET MISSION

his operations in Kentucky and in the South and Southwest, Clark had sacrificed his leadership and forfeited his prestige by excessive indulgence in strong drink. The expedition of September, 1786, against the Indians, led by Clark, was, so far as Clark was concerned, an utter and ignominious failure. (Marshall, *Hist. of Ky.*, Ed. 1812, p. 290.) (For further testimony to Clark's growing habit of inebriety, see *Cal. Va. State Papers*, Vol. II).

One of the finest and noblest characters in the West was General Benjamin Logan, of Kentucky, and Humphrey Marshall cannot praise him too highly. (See Marshall's *Hist. Ky.*, Ed. 1812, pp. 60-72.) Among other things, he says: "The statesman's eye is crowned with the warrior's brow; and a countenance which displays an unyielding fortitude, invites to a confidence which was never betrayed." Yet it is clear from the evidence that Logan was almost as deep in the mud as Clark was in the mire, in the matter of the Genet expedition. It does not in the slightest degree lessen Logan in my estimation that this was so, but charity, if not partiality, demands an even more complete exoneration of the character and conduct of Isaac Shelby, whose talents were as great and character as pure as that of Logan or any of his associates and contemporaries.

It is noticeable that Humphrey Marshall says not a word about George Rogers Clark's offer of his sword and services to Spain, in 1788, in return for a land grant, yet the fact was notorious, and any combination with the Spaniards was an abomination to the intolerant Humphrey. It really mattered little to Clark under whose banner he served, he was ready to expatriate himself for either France or Spain, and his military prowess and resources were always at the disposal of the highest bidder. In witness of this, observe how he threatened and blustered, when he called upon the Virginia Council and the Executive of Virginia for munitions in 1776, with which to checkmate the Transylvania project and to solidify the resistance to the Indians.

Referring to the proposed expedition against Louisiana,

A REVIEW BY SAMUEL M. WILSON

Roosevelt (Winning of the West, Part VI, Chap. II), has tersely said:

"It was a piece of sheer filibustering, not differing materially from one of Walker's filibustering attempts in Central America sixty years later, save that *at this time Clark had utterly lost his splendid vigor of body and mind and was unfit for the task he had set himself.*"

"*A la tête de ces filibustiers des Bois,*" in March, 1793, wrote Pierre Lyonnet, a Frenchman, who had lived in New Orleans, was to be placed this same George Rogers Clark. (Am. Hist. Review, Vol. III, p. 501.) Clark's claim for reimbursement from "La République Française" asks pay for—

"*A une Capitaine 1 lieutenant et 100 hommes pendant deux Mois, \$1346.*" (Am. Hist. Assoc. Rep., 1896, p. 1072.)

Concerning this "corporal's guard," Clark himself wrote from Louisville, to "The Committee of Public Safety," on November 2d, 1795:

"I think unnecessary to inclose a Return of the Recruits as they were (except *one Company*) never called to the field as Col. Fulton will fully explain to you." (Am. Hist. Assoc. Rep., 1896, pp. 1095-96.)

The closer one gets to the "two thousand brave Kentuckians," how sadly they fade away! To have sent an army against Clark "and Company" would have been more futile even than the monster military demonstration launched by the General Government against the Whiskey Insurgents in Western Pennsylvania, concerning which Jefferson, in May, 1795, wrote to James Monroe: "An insurrection was announced, and proclaimed, and armed against and marched against, and could never be found. (W. W., Hist. Am. People, Vol. III, p. 137.)

John R. Spears, in his "History of the Mississippi Valley," published in 1903, makes a brief allusion to Citizen Genet and his Mississippi Scheme, at page 371, of his book, as follows:

"Then the shadow of the French Revolution reached out to the United States. 'Citizen' Genet was sent over as

ISAAC SHELBY AND THE GENET MISSION

Minister. He arrived on April 8, 1793. He brought 300 blank army and navy commissions with him, and sent an agent to Kentucky to enlist enough men there to help the French of New Orleans throw off the Spanish yoke. George Rogers Clark was the chosen head of this proposed expedition, *although for years he had been a common drunkard. But how much of substance there was to the intrigue appears from the fact that Clark received only \$400 cash for the expenses of the 2,000 men he was to organize and conduct down the river.*"

At page 385, Spears calls attention to the fact that Jefferson, who, as Secretary of State of the United States, had been in correspondence with Governor Shelby regarding the designs of Genet—

"Had idealized, if he had not idolized, the French. He had spoken of the excitement raised in the United States when 'Citizen' Genet was distributing piratical commissions from Charleston to Philadelphia as a revival of the 'Spirit of 1776.'"

On January 1st, 1794, as we know, President Washington accepted Jefferson's resignation from his cabinet, and Jefferson's post as Secretary of State was taken by Edmund Randolph, who had been Attorney General. Washington afterwards fell out with Randolph for what he regarded as disloyalty, and toward the close of the year 1795, practically "fired" him from the cabinet.

As Spears points out (Hist. Miss. Valley, p. 364), as early as 1786, Clark had contemplated a filibustering expedition down the river, at least as far as Natchez, "but nothing was done." Thus it was, throughout his later years, from the time drink began to get the better of him, in the early eighties, until the Genet fiasco and later. With the view of doing something to regain his lost prestige and repair his broken fortunes, Clark was spasmodically planning military expeditions on a grand scale only to have them end in dismal and pathetic failure. It gives me no pleasure to recall these things. I love and admire Clark immensely for what he had so handsomely done, in the brilliant heyday of his unspoiled youth, but these unpleasant truths help us the better to understand why Gov-

A REVIEW BY SAMUEL M. WILSON

ernor Shelby discounted the prospects of the French filibuster, looked on the ingratiating overtures of Lachaise and DePauw with such seeming equanimity and viewed the flaming manifesto of Clark and his associated firebrands with such self-assured composure. Shelby not only knew Clark, but he knew his Kentuckians also, as Humphrey Marshall, an extreme partisan, egotistical, morose, and vitriolic, never did; and the "Hero of King's Mountain" was not to be thrown into a panic by loud and vociferous talk.

In the article under review, Dr. Henderson quotes from an anonymous communication entitled "The Crisis," and signed "An Old-fashioned Republican," which was published in the Kentucky Gazette for February 8, 1794, and states that this incendiary article "closes with the following apostrophe, *presumably* addressed to revolutionary leaders, among whom George Rogers Clark and Isaac Shelby were numbered," etc. The logic of this presumption, I do not assail, but the propriety of joining Shelby with Clark among those likely to respond favorably to the passionate appeal, I respectfully question. The population of Kentucky, in 1793-94, as I have said, was not far from 100,000 and there were several thousand inhabitants of the Commonwealth at that time who had formerly been soldiers of the Revolution. In ten dignified and orderly Conventions, running through a period of eight years from 1784 to 1792, the goal of statehood had been slowly, laboriously and patiently sought. If one would correctly understand the temper of Kentucky and of those who dominated its thought and controlled its action in those years, he must study the records of these Conventions and of the Political Club, which existed at Danville from 1786 to 1790. The temper of the "remaining veteran patriots," whom the author of the "Crisis" article apostrophizes, may fairly be gathered from the letter of July 5, 1794, written by Major William Price, of Fayette County, to Governor Shelby, and reproduced, as I have previously indicated, at page 150 of my 1913 Year Book for the Kentucky Society of Sons of the Revolution. As an antidote to Humphrey Marshall's prejudiced and distorted views of men and things, read Mann Butler's History of Kentucky,

ISAAC SHELBY AND THE GENET MISSION

1836 Edition, and John Mason Brown's "Political Beginnings of Kentucky," and Judge Alex. P. Humphrey's Address on the "Political Club." Thomas Marshall Green's "Spanish Conspiracy" is an able reply to Brown (who was then dead, and, of course, unable to make any rejoinder), but it is of interest to note that Green, a kinsman of Humphrey Marshall, but a better-balanced historian and a thoroughly fearless and outspoken man, nowhere reflects upon Isaac Shelby in his narrative. Governor Shelby was no more accountable for the irresponsible utterances of any self-styled "Old-fashioned Republican," than for the wild ravings of any other thoughtless enthusiast who may have felt impelled to break into print or to "breathe out threatenings" against constituted authority. In those days, any man "on the Western Waters" (Humphrey Marshall himself included), could print and publish with practical immunity anything he pleased, being answerable only for offensive personalities. Even if the article had been directed at Shelby (which I seriously doubt), surely a man of honor, no less than a pure woman, is not to be besmirched by the indecent anonymous proposals of a blatherskite or a blackguard, and then, as now, freedom of speech and the liberty of the press were guaranteed by both the State and Federal Constitutions.

Lest I forget it, although somewhat out of place, let me here call attention to the fact that Charles DePauw (who came over with LaFayette in 1777, became a useful and respected citizen of Kentucky, and whose grandson was the founder or chief benefactor of Depauw University, Indiana), in a paper he appears to have furnished Judge Harry Innes, in 1807-08, certifies among other things, that:

"Genet gave Lachase but Little monny to come with me and I had some of the Burding to pay for him, he also rod one of my horses and was willecom at my table gratis—it is it is a well knowing fect that he after I refused him Loans of monny he went to governor Schelby and requested a Loan of monny from him But could not get any, and told a number of puple he would expose the gov for refusing 'is request." (Am. Hist. Assoc. Report, 1896, p. 1105.)

A REVIEW BY SAMUEL M. WILSON

If Shelby had even tacitly approved the plot that was hatching, is it likely that he would have flatly refused Lachaise (a Creole of Louisiana) a loan?

In this connection, let me call attention to some significant occurrences that tend to show how loose as yet were the ties of even the purest patriots to the Federal Union.

On April 29th, 1793 (three weeks after M. Genet had landed at Charleston, S. C., and ten days or more before he reached Philadelphia), General Henry Lee, Governor of Virginia, wrote from Richmond, the capital, to President Washington as follows:

"As soon after my hearing of your return to Mount Vernon as I could, I set out on a visit to you, but unfortunately your stay at home was so short that I could not see you. I had reached Stafford Court-House, when I accidentally learned that you had departed on the previous Sunday; and on knowing this I instantly turned back from whence I came. This disappointment would have always been mortifying to me, as it deprived me of the pleasure of seeing you; but it was uncommonly so then, as I had vast solicitude to obtain your opinion on a subject highly interesting to me personally.

"Bred to arms, I have always since my domestic calamity wished for a return to my profession, as the best resort for my mind in its affliction. Finding the serious turn, which the French affairs took last year, I interposed with the Marquis to obtain me a commission in their army, and at the same time made the same application in another way. The Marquis, about the time he got my letter, took the part, which issued so unfortunately to him. From him I had no reply. But from the other source I am informed, that a Major-General's commission will be given to me on my appearance in Paris, and that probably that it would be sent to me. I have detailed this to you, merely that your mind might be fully informed, inasmuch as the step I may take will be to me all-important, I am consequently solicitous for the best advice, and this I am persuaded you can give. Should it be improper on your part, much as I want it, I must relinquish the hope. But as your opinion to me will never be known but to myself, and as I ask your counsel in your private character, I feel a presumption in favor of my wishes.

"If fair war on terms of honor, with certainty of

ISAAC SHELBY AND THE GENET MISSION

sustenance to the troops, and certainty of concert among the citizens, will and can be supported by France, I will embark. If the reverse in any part is probable, to go would be the completion of my lot of misery. You see my situation; you have experienced my secrecy in my younger days, and you know the invincible affection I bear towards you. Apprehend no improper effects of your free opinion to me." (Sparks' Writings of Washington, Vol. X, pp. 343-344, note.)

As Dr. Henderson remarks of Shelby's letter to Jefferson, of January, 1794, this letter from Governor Lee to President Washington, "is extraordinary in many respects as coming from a governor of an American state and addressed to the general government."

To this letter, Washington, under date of 6th May, 1793, wrote from Philadelphia to Governor Lee a reply marked "Private," from which the following extracts are taken:

"On Saturday last your favor of the 29th ultimo was handed to me. * * * (After referring to his Proclamation of April 22, 1793, and to the Indian hostilities on the Western frontiers, he proceeds):

"I come now to a more difficult part of your letter. As a public character, I can say nothing on the subject of it. As a private man, I am unwilling to say much. Give advice I shall not. All I can do, then, towards complying with your request is to declare that, if the case which you have suggested were mine, I should ponder well before I resolved; not only for private considerations, but on public grounds. The latter, because, being the first magistrate of a respectable State, much speculation would be excited by such a measure, and the consequences thereof not seen into at the first glance. As it might respect myself only, because it would appear a boundless ocean I was about to embark on, from whence no land is to be seen. In other words, because the affairs of (France) would seem to me to be in the highest paroxysm of disorder; not so much from the pressure of foreign enemies, for in the cause of liberty this ought to be fuel to the fire of a patriotic soldier, and to increase his ardor, but because those in whose hands the government is intrusted are ready to tear each other to pieces, and will more than probably prove the worst foes the country has. To all which may be added the probability of the scarcity of

A REVIEW BY SAMUEL M. WILSON

bread, from the peculiar circumstances of the contending parties, which, if it should happen, would accelerate a crisis of sad confusion, and possibly of entire change in the political system.

"Although no name will appear in this letter, I beg it may be committed to the flames as soon as it is read. I need not add, because you must know it, that I am always yours." (Sparks' Writings of Washington, Vol. X, pp. 342-345.)

The tone of this letter is conservative, to say the least, and it does not appear to frown very severely upon the frank suggestion that the distinguished Governor of Virginia was seriously considering accepting a commission as a Major-General in the Armies of France. There is said to be a vast difference between Philip drunk and Philip sober, but when one compares the case of George Rogers Clark, of the Western wilderness, unhampered by official obligations, with that of Henry Lee, of Tidewater Virginia, acting Governor of his native State, the offence of the former does not appear to have been so heinous or so unforgivable after all; and the behavior of Governor Shelby, in all the circumstances, must be conceded to have been unexceptionable.

Going back a moment, it is interesting to note how softly Washington himself touched on the somewhat disturbing developments of the Genet mission, in his Message to Congress of December 5, 1793. (Am. State Papers, Foreign Relations, 2d Ed., Vol. I, pp. 49-50.)

Here is his exact language:

"It is with extreme concern, I have to inform you, that the proceedings of the person (Genet), whom they have unfortunately appointed their minister plenipotentiary here, have breathed nothing of the friendly spirit of the nation, which sent him; their tendency on the contrary, has been to involve us in war abroad, and discord and anarchy at home. So far as his acts, or those of his agents, have threatened our immediate commitment in the war, or flagrant insult to the authority of the laws, their effect has been counteracted by the ordinary cognizance of the laws, and by an exertion of the powers confided to me. *Where their danger was not imminent, they have been*

ISAAC SHELBY AND THE GENET MISSION

borne with, from sentiments of regard to his nation; from a sense of their friendship toward us; from a conviction that they would not suffer us to remain long exposed to the action of a person, who has so little respected our mutual dispositions; and, I will add, from a reliance on the firmness of my fellow citizens in their principles of peace and order.

"In the mean time, I have respected and pursued the stipulations of our treaties, according to what I judged their true sense; and have withheld no act of friendship, which their affairs have called for from us, and which justice to others left us free to perform. *I have gone further; rather than employ force for the restitution of certain vessels*, which I deemed the United States *bound to restore*, I thought it *more advisable* to satisfy the parties, by avowing it to be my opinion, that if restitution were not made, it would be incumbent on the United States to make compensation. The papers, now communicated, will more particularly apprise you of these transactions."

Two months before his Proclamation of March 24th, 1794, warning against unauthorized expeditions against the territory of Spain, President Washington, on January 20th, 1794, sent to Congress the following Message:

"Having already laid before you a letter of the 16th of August, 1793, from the Secretary of State to our minister at Paris, stating the conduct, and urging the recall of the minister plenipotentiary of the Republic of France, I now communicate to you, *that his conduct has been unequivocally disapproved*, and that the strongest assurances have been given that his recall should be expedited without delay." (Am. St. Papers, For. Rel., 2d Ed., Vol. I, p. 490.)

One can't help wondering why this important piece of news was not simultaneously communicated to Governor Shelby and other Southern Governors concerned.

Shelby's letter of January 13th, 1794, must have reached the Department of State and have been brought to the attention of the President early in February. Under date of February 23, 1794, Christopher Greenup, at that time a Representative in Congress from Kentucky and afterwards a Governor of Kentucky, wrote Gov. Shelby from Philadelphia, ad-

A REVIEW BY SAMUEL M. WILSON

vising him that Fauchet (Genet's successor) "arrived last Friday, and was introduced to the President, February 22." (Draper Collection, 11 Clark Mss., 246.) On March 6, 1794, Fauchet's Orders were inserted in the "Centinel of the North-western Territory," revoking commissions and forbidding Frenchmen to violate United States neutrality. (Collins, Kentucky, Vol. II, p. 113.) Yet not until March 24th, 1794, does the President come out with his vigorous Proclamation denouncing the abortive expedition. (Richardson's Messages & Papers of the Presidents, Vol. I, p. 157.) And not until March 29th, 1794, did Edmund Randolph, Secretary of State, follow this up with his labored argument to demonstrate the inconsistency between Shelby's letters of October 5, 1793, and January 13th, 1794; attempt to lay down the law applicable to the case; and advise the Kentucky Governor that negotiations for the free navigation of the Mississippi were progressing, and that the new French Minister (Fauchet) had disavowed the expedition.

In my opinion, it is not correct to say that Governor Shelby's letter of January 13th, 1794, to Jefferson, precipitated President Washington's Proclamation of March 24th, 1794, or as Dr. Henderson puts it: "It is clear that the President, on the basis of Shelby's letter of January 13, 1794, feared that Shelby, in his capacity as Governor of Kentucky, was *strongly disposed against* taking drastic action, either legal or military, in suppressing the projected freebooting expedition. *Accordingly*, taking the matter into his own hands, he issued a proclamation (March 24, 1794) declaring," etc. It was only after Washington had become, by slow degrees, absolutely sure of his ground, that he put forth this Proclamation. Genet was then discredited and out of the way, and his successor, Fauchet, more than two weeks before (March 6, 1794) had publicly and in the most formal and emphatic way disavowed the hostile undertaking with reference to Louisiana. If the "famous letter" of January 13, 1794, was so disturbing to Washington, why did he not issue his Proclamation instantly, instead of waiting seven or eight weeks after its arrival to declare himself?

ISAAC SHELBY AND THE GENET MISSION

The official records show that Washington, at first, did not know what ought to be his attitude toward France or toward Genet, the representative of France, in view of our treaty relations with France, and he proceeded most cautiously, seeking, before he acted, not only the individual and joint opinions of the four members of his cabinet, but also the opinions of the justices of the Supreme Court. Here, in passing, I call attention to the fact that the idea of a post at Fort Massac was suggested to Wayne as early as May 17th, 1793 (Am. St. Papers, 2d Ed., Vol. II, p. 49). Dr. Henderson (as well as other writers) refers to this as if it were first thought of by the President, at the time he issued his Proclamation of March 24, 1794. "Washington took the additional step," writes Dr. Henderson, "of directing General Wayne to 'establish a strong military post at Fort Massac on the Ohio.'" etc.

In his Message of November 15th, 1794, Governor Shelby had said:

"The subject now became serious and interesting, and required the most attentive consideration; for although I felt no apprehensions that the intended expedition could be carried into effect, yet I entertained too high a sense of the obligations due to the General Government, to refuse the exercise of any powers with which I was clearly invested. After the most careful examination of the subject, I was doubtful whether under the constitution and laws of my country, I possessed powers so extensive as those which I was called upon to exercise. Thus situated, I thought it advisable to write the letter No. 5 (of 13th January, 1794), in which all the information I had received is fully detailed, my doubts as to the extent of my powers carefully stated, and the strongest assurances given that every legal requisition of the General Government should, on my part, be punctually complied with. To this letter no answer was received until May, 1794; at which time No. 6 (Randolph's of March 29th, 1794), came to my hands. In the former part of this letter an attempt is made to remove the doubts which I had suggested, and to prove that I might comply with the instructions of the General Government; but *prior to the receipt of this letter, a bill had been brought before Congress* declaring that to embark in an enterprise, such as was contemplated by the Citizens of this State, should be considered as criminal,

A REVIEW BY SAMUEL M. WILSON

and directing what punishment should be inflicted on those who should be guilty of such an offense.

"From the necessity of passing that law, I infer that my doubts as to the criminality of the proposed enterprize were well founded, and until the passage of that law, the offence had not been declared nor the punishment defined. *But before the receipt of this letter, or the passing of the 'Act in addition to the act for the punishment of certain crimes against the United States,' the enterprize was so far abandoned, as to remove every apprehension of its being carried into effect.*" (Butler, Hist. Ky., Ed. 1836, pp. 525, 526.)

When Shelby transmitted this Message, he was not quite forty-four years of age, and in the prime of a vigorous manhood. "Lapse of years" had not clouded either his intellect or his memory, nor had intrigue seared his conscience or seduced his patriotism. Now, let us see how he expressed himself to General Martin D. Hardin, on July 1st, 1812, and judge whether he has "clearly fallen into error, after the lapse of years." In that letter, he says:

"There is, to be sure, *some inconsistency* in my two letters to the Secretary of State of the United States *and I saw it at the time*, but at the date of the last (i. e. Jany. 13, 1794), I saw evidently that the whole scheme of Lachaise would fall to the ground without any interference, and that the present moment was a favorable one, while the apprehensions of the President were greatly excited, to express to him what I knew to be the general sentiments of the Kentucky people, relative to the navigation of the Mississippi and the Spanish Government; those sentiments had often to my knowledge been expressed by way of petition and memorial to the general Government, and to which no assurance nor any kind of answer had been received, and I feel an entire confidence that my letter of the 13th of January, 1794, was the sole cause that produced an explanation by the special commissioner, Colonel James Innes, of the measures that had been pursued by our Government towards obtaining for us the navigation of the Mississippi; and although I felt some regret that I had for a moment kept the President uneasy, I was truly gratified to find that our right to the navigation of that river had been well asserted by the President in the negotiations carried on at Madrid. * * *

ISAAC SHELBY AND THE GENET MISSION

"For my own part, I cannot attempt to combat this mammoth of slander (Humphrey Marshall), but he may be asked if there was anything like conspiracy in all this affair, why he did not make it known sooner? The whole correspondence (was) laid before the Legislature on the 15th of November, 1794, upon a resolution introduced by *himself* on the 12th of that month; but perhaps it was he himself that prevented any order being taken upon them, lest it should have turned out to my advantage, for the Legislature, I understood, were well pleased with the part I had acted."

I can discover no "error" here, but an accurate, straightforward rejoinder to the injurious aspersions of Shelby's implacable enemy, Humphrey Marshall. He frankly admits that there was "*some inconsistency*" between his two letters to Jefferson, but there is no trace of equivocation; no utterance that can fairly be characterized as "equivocal" or "dubious and equivocal." All men are guilty of occasional "inconsistencies," and this need not be a matter of reproach, but men of honesty are seldom betrayed into "equivocal" conduct or "equivocal" statements, and duplicity was never a trait of the man whose acts are under consideration. The crowning glory of Isaac Shelby was his rugged and unwavering *honesty*, and it is not without significance that that able military critic, General John Watts DePeyster, in his admirable sketch of the Battle or Affair of King's Mountain, has most appropriately and with emphasis called him "*Honest Shelby*."

Was Governor Shelby warranted in supposing that the French Filibuster would collapse, at the date of his second letter to Jefferson, on January 13, 1794? We will let Logan and Clark, as reported by Michaux, Washington, as disclosed by his Message of January 20th, 1794, to Congress, General Robert Breckinridge, as shown by his letter to Shelby of January 10th, 1794, James Brown, as shown by his letter to Shelby of February 16, 1794 (as well as by other letters of Brown, apparently not preserved, referred to by Shelby in his letter to Hardin of July 1, 1812), and John S. Gano, of Cincinnati, who was at Lexington and Frankfort for six days and left Lexington for Cincinnati on the 8th or 9th of April, 1794, and re-

A REVIEW BY SAMUEL M. WILSON

ported "that the expedition of Gen. Clarke, to open the free navigation of the Mississippi, *which had been suspended apparently for want of money*, had again revived," etc. (Am. St. Papers, 2d Ed., Vol. 2, p. 54), answer this question. These documents will also answer the same question, as applied to Shelby's letter to Wayne of February 10th, 1794. I submit that it is reasonable to assume that these documents do not contain all the evidence upon which Governor Shelby had a right to rely in forming his opinion. He was in touch with many men throughout the State, and, doubtless, had much else to go on.

Furthermore, it is worthy of note that Washington himself, in his message of May 20, 1794, to Congress (Am. St. Papers, 2d Ed., Vol. 2, pp. 35-36), having Gano's report of April 10th, and other similar data, before him, had said:

"That there was reason to believe that the enterprise, projected against the Spanish dominions, was relinquished.

"But it appears to have been revived upon principles which set publick order at defiance, and place the peace of the United States in the discretion of unauthorized individuals.

"The means already deposited in the different departments of government, are shown by experience not to be adequate to these high exigencies, although such of them as are lodged in the hands of the Executive shall continue to be used with promptness, energy and decision proportioned to the case. But I am impelled by the position of our publick affairs to recommend that provision be made for a stronger, and more vigorous opposition than can be given to such hostile movements under the laws as they now stand."

Does not this corroborate Governor Shelby, and can any one wonder that Congress should have thought it necessary to enact the law of June 5, 1794, which manifestly resulted from Shelby's letter of January 13, 1794, and the President's Message of May 20th, 1794? If the language of Washington, in the foregoing extracts, followed by the enactment of the law of June 5, 1794, does not bear out Governor Shelby's statement, in his "famous letter" of January 13, 1794, and fully sustain his explanation to the Kentucky House of Representa-

ISAAC SHELBY AND THE GENET MISSION

tives on November 15, 1794, and his later explanation to General Hardin on July 1, 1812, then I, for one, fail to comprehend the meaning of language. Besides this, I think it helps to do away with the humiliating apology, based upon his assumed "senility" (at the ripe age of 62), when he was still able, more than a year later (in August-October, 1813), most vigorously to assemble, command and lead to victory an army in the field, and it also disproves his alleged lack of "political ability" or "political good sense," as flippantly charged by Theodore Roosevelt in his "Winning of the West." Concerning Governor Shelby's performance in the Thames campaign, General William Henry Harrison, then a vigorous youngster, reported officially to the Secretary of War: "In communicating to the President through you, sir, my opinion of the conduct of the officers who served under my command, I am at a loss how to mention that of Governor Shelby, being convinced that no eulogium of mine can reach his merit. The Governor of an independent State, greatly my superior in years, in experience and in military character, he placed himself under my command, and was not more remarkable *for his zeal and activity* than for the promptitude and cheerfulness with which he obeyed my orders." * * *

After passing these facts in review, can any candid man doubt that when Governor Shelby, at the commencement of his campaign for the governorship in 1812, addressed the "Free-men of Kentucky," as recorded at pages 529-531, of Butler's History of Kentucky, Edition of 1836, he told the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth? Do not the following sentences, in that "Address," have the unmistakable ring of truth and sincerity and carry conviction:

"I had my eye upon the preparation for the enterprize, and was prepared to stop it if force was requisite. But under the full belief that the project would die a natural death, and that in the situation in which the public mind then was, it was important to abstain from harsh means, if possible—that at the period when the preparation were said to be in the greatest forwardness, I had a full belief that the expedition would fail. I refer to my letter of the 10th Feb. 1794, to General Wayne, for the correctness of

* * * Again, in the same dispatch, says General Harrison, "The venerable Governor of Kentucky, at the age of sixty-six (63), preserves all the vigor of youth", etc.

A REVIEW BY SAMUEL M. WILSON

this opinion. I was not mistaken in my calculations; it eventuated as I expected; and I hesitate not to say, had I interfered by having any of the persons concerned arrested under the civil authority upon suspicion, as the law then stood, that it would have excited heat and animosities, and in all probability it would have proved abortive; and if so, it would have promoted instead of retarding the preparations. The doubts which I then entertained of the sufficiency of the laws to reach the case, was the result of candid reflection, and the best advice I was able to procure only tended to confirm the opinion, that until the passage of the law of Congress of the 5th June, 1794, the civil authority could not interfere to arrest the preparations made with an intention of commencing an enterprise against a neighboring territory—that law was introduced and passed in consequence of my letter on that subject; it was immediately communicated to me by the Secretary of State of the U. S.—besides, the want of an attorney in the Federal Court, as well as I recollect, put it out of my power to adopt the peaceable measures recommended in the letter of the Secretary.”

In referring to the President's Proclamation of March 24, 1794 (p. 466, Miss. Valley Hist. Review, Vol. VI, No. 4, March, 1920), Dr. Henderson seems to intimate that Washington was convinced that he could place no dependence upon Governor Shelby in the matter of suppressing the threatened expedition. That this was not so and that Washington had not lost faith in Shelby is established by two circumstances, to-wit: (1) In his Message of May 20th, 1794, to Congress, the President informed that body that the “enterprise projected against the Spanish dominions * * * *appears to have been revived;*” yet (2) the feeling of the Washington Administration toward Governor Shelby is unequivocally expressed in a letter from the Secretary of War to Governor Shelby, bearing date May 16th, 1794 (written only four days before the Message to Congress), which contains, among other indications of the fullest confidence, these statements:

“The President, confiding in the patriotism and good disposition of your Excellency, requests that you will afford all the facilities, countenance, and aid in your power to the proposed expedition (of Wayne against the Ohio

ISAAC SHELBY AND THE GENET MISSION

Indians) from which, if successful, the State of Kentucky will reap the most abundant advantages.

* * * * *

"I have conceived it to be my duty to make this communication and at the same time, *in the name and authority of the President of the United States, to confide to your judgment,*" etc.

Washington was neither a fool nor a "stuffed prophet," and I have a well-grounded suspicion that he trusted Isaac Shelby, notwithstanding his "recalcitrant and defiant" letter of January 13, 1794, even more implicitly than he did some of those advisers who were closest about him, or others, more remote, who were loudest in their protestations of allegiance. We know, at least, what happened in the cases of Edmund Randolph and Willie Blount, within a few short years after the Genet episode.

For my part, I like what Charles Jared Ingersoll, of Philadelphia, distinguished as a statesman, diplomat and author, has to say about the affair in his interesting book of "Recollections," which appeared in 1861. These are his remarks, in part (pp. 22-24):

"The French revolution, which began in 1789, had made fearful progress in 1793. * * * Shot from that volcano, as it were a bomb across the Atlantic, a young, well-educated, and accomplished firebrand of a minister, Edmund Genet, fell on the United States to embroil them in hostilities by sea against Britain, and ashore against Spain, by a hostile expedition to take Louisiana; to enlist for the former the people of the sea-ports, arm and organize for the latter those of the adjacent Southwestern population, to be led to that enterprise by the French Minister as their commander. * * *

"Genet pursued both (designs) with equal ardor and boldness; caused troops to be enlisted in South Carolina and Georgia, and his commission was accepted by no less a Kentucky personage than General George Rogers Clark, many, if not most, of the martial people of that enterprising State, just admitted in the Union and hardly reconciled to its control, excited to arm under the French Minister's command for the conquest of Louisiana. *Such considerate and respectable patriots* as Isaac Shelby, the first Governor; Harry Innes, the District Judge of the United

States; John Brown and John Breckinridge, afterwards Senators of the United States; Thomas Todd, afterwards Judge of the Supreme Court of the United States, with many more of Kentucky's best men, *submitted reluctantly* to Secretary Jefferson's *injunctions*, by President Washington's directions, *laid on Governor Shelby*, to prevent warlike irregularities and arrest their abettors, under the French Minister's instigation to organize for conquering Louisiana. Still palpitating aversion to England, inherited with recent independence, not achieved without treaties, armies, navies, and treasures, for which gratitude was due to France, were sentiments warming Kentucky hearts, which Governor Shelby imbibed at King's Mountain, and with his fellow-countrymen in other conflicts, *to influence their feelings but without destroying their patriotism*. *Nothing could be more loyal* than the Governor's answer to Secretary Jefferson:

"'Whatever be my private opinion as a man, a friend to liberty, an American citizen, and an inhabitant of the Western waters, I shall at all times hold it to be my duty to perform whatever may be constitutionally required of me, as Governor of Kentucky, by the President of the United States.' " (And see Meigs' Life of Ingersoll.)

My opinion is that Washington understood the West and sympathized with the West. At any rate, he was not to be hastily stampeded by unverified rumors of local disaffection. In a letter of 22nd December, 1795, from Philadelphia, to Gouverneur Morris, then abroad, Washington said:

"I do not think that Colonel (James) Innes's report to the Governor of Kentucky was entirely free from exceptions. But let the report be accompanied with the following remarks: First, that the one which Lord Grenville might have seen published was disclaimed by Colonel Innes, as soon as it appeared in the public gazettes, on account of its incorrectness. Secondly, an irritable spirit at that time pervaded all our people at the westward, arising from a combination of causes (but from none more powerful than the analogous proceedings of Great Britain, in the north, to those of Spain, in the south, towards the United States and their Indian borderers), which spirit required some management and soothing. * * * In a government as free as ours, where the people are at liberty and will express their sentiments (oftentimes imprudently,

ISAAC SHELBY AND THE GENET MISSION

and, for want of information, sometimes unjustly), allowances must be made for occasional effervescences." (Sparks' Writings of Washington, Vol. XI, pp. 99-100, 103.)

I am sorry to see that Dr. Henderson cites McElroy's book ("Kentucky in the Nation's History") as an authority. Ten years ago, when I first read his chapter on "One Phase of the Genet Mission," and encountered the sentence (p. 172) referring to Shelby's reply to Jefferson of October 5, 1793, "Whether Governor Shelby was perfectly *open and honest* in this statement may be *justly* questioned," it was with a feeling of disappointment, tinged with resentment and disgust. Any man who feels that he can "justly" question the "candor" or "honesty" of Isaac Shelby is, in my opinion, an utter stranger to his true character. The animadversion by McElroy is all the more obnoxious to me because it emanated from a Kentuckian who ought to have known better, or, at least, to have expressed his doubts, if he honestly, though mistakenly, entertained them, in more guarded language. McElroy's book represents, I freely admit, a lot of hard work and is a useful compend, but it is essentially a "re-hash" and scarcely deserves to be classed as a product of original or thorough research or a first-hand historical contribution, in any sense of the word. He is noticeably careless in the chapter to which I have referred, in that he makes practically no use of the important documents published as Appendices to the second Edition of Butler's History of Kentucky, virtually ignores Butler's text, and manifests no acquaintance whatever with the "Correspondence of Genet and Clark," published by the American Historical Association in 1896. If he had ever so much as heard of Frederick J. Turner's "Origin of Genet's Projected Attack on Louisiana and the Floridas," published in Vol. III, of the American Historical Review, or the "Documents on the Relations of France to Louisiana, 1792-1795," published in the same volume, there is nothing to indicate it. The Appendices in Butler, Dr. Henderson has used, to some extent, but, as regards Governor Shelby's own explanation there found, its effect has, in a measure, been neutralized or minimized by comments, some of which, in this Review, I have taken leave to criticise.

A REVIEW BY SAMUEL M. WILSON

After one gets to know his character, it is always safe to rely on Governor Shelby's honesty, truthfulness, fidelity, and sound sense, and, after making all due allowance for deficient information, or misinformation, slips of memory, and the inroads of advancing age, I think he will be found pretty generally accurate.

In conclusion, I must call attention to the fact that the very first question discussed by the Danville Political Club (in 1786) was the one of pressing and superlative importance to the people of Kentucky, namely, "Whether the immediate navigation of the Mississippi River will contribute to the interest of this District or not?" (*The Political Club*, p. 107, Filson Club Pub., No. 9.)

In 1786, as then reported to the people of Kentucky, a proposition had been submitted to the Continental Congress by John Jay to cede to Spain the control of the Mississippi for twenty-five or thirty years. This caused great excitement and unrest. The suggestion of surrendering or bartering away, even for a limited term of years, their only practicable commercial outlet to the sea was most alarming. A convention was called (the *ad interim* Convention between the Fourth and Fifth of the entire series of *ten* which preceded the attainment of Statehood), to meet at Danville in May, 1787, to consider the subject. It met but adjourned *without action*. The long-suffering patience of Kentucky on this vital subject is shown by the fact that the treaty negotiated by Thomas Pinckney with Spain, whereby the right of free navigation of the Mississippi was conceded, was not officially published to the country by the National administration until 2d August, 1796, a full ten years after the subject had first begun seriously to agitate the people of the Kentucky district. (See Spears, *Hist. Miss. Valley*, p. 374.)

In 1793-94, both the national and state governments were still in the experimental or formative stage—neither had "found itself." And, to judge the situation accurately, one must bear in mind that this Genet business all happened, not in the beginning of the twentieth, but in the end of the eighteenth century, when the federal system was yet in its infancy,

ISAAC SHELBY AND THE GENET MISSION

and State Rights and State Sovereignty (both now apparently reduced to a minimum), overshadowed the theoretical supremacy of the "General Government," as it was then called. Washington himself, as I have attempted to point out, was, at first, in the dark as to the nature and scope of our treaty obligations to France. He repeatedly sought the advice of the four members of his Cabinet, individually and collectively, and even submitted a list of questions to the members of the Supreme Court. It was only by slow degrees that the National Administration, as well as the country at large, came to know where it stood with reference to the Genet Mission. Apart from his indiscreet juvenile zeal and his tactless manners, the capital mistake of Genet was in supposing that Congress was sovereign and supreme in everything. He played his cards accordingly, and lost.

As late as 1842, fifty years after Genet received his appointment as Minister Plenipotentiary to the United States, John Quincy Adams, of Massachusetts, an ex-President of the United States and then a member of Congress, had the hardihood, on behalf of certain of his constituents, to offer to present in the House of Representatives a Petition praying a peaceable dissolution of the Union, because of the tolerance of slavery, and was severely arraigned for it by Thomas F. Marshall, of Kentucky, at that time representing the "Ashland" District.

It is right that Isaac Shelby should bear whatever blame may be justly attributable to him for his sentiments and conduct, provided judgment is based upon what he actually said and did and not upon groundless surmise, malicious slander, or bare suspicion. But to one who carefully and impartially studies and earnestly strives to understand the situation of all the actors concerned, such blame, if any, will not amount to a very great deal. More than this, to say, as Roosevelt does, with characteristic unfairness, cocksurenness and flippancy (Winning of the West, Part VI, Chap. II), that Shelby "possessed no marked political ability, and was entirely lacking in the strength of character which would have fitted him to put a stop to rebellion and lawlessness" and "did not possess

A REVIEW BY SAMUEL M. WILSON

sufficient political good sense to appreciate either the benefits of the Central Government or the need of preserving order," is not only to fly in the face of the established facts but is to contradict, without cause, all that we know and believe of him from both authentic history and well-accredited tradition.

Clark's "freebooting expedition" was not exactly a "colossal bluff," but rather a "colossal bubble"—a fizzle, a fluke, a fiasco. It was, as Henry Lee characterized it, after his first enthusiasm had cooled, a "Quixotic adventure." The mountain labored and brought forth a mouse. And as for the dashing young diplomat, Genet, all that need be said is that, with the ratification and promulgation of the proposed Franco-British-American defensive alliance, now awaiting final action by the U. S. A., the France of today may realize what her revolutionary government claimed of us, in vain, in 1792-1794.

ADDENDA

1. Jefferson's letter to Shelby was dated November 6, *not* Nov. 9th; whereas Knox's letter bore the latter date, November 9th, 1793, and Jefferson's letter was enclosed with it. This is shown correctly in the "Star of Empire" but not in the Miss. Valley article (p. 454).

Knox (Sec'y of War), on the same date (Nov. 9th, 1793) wrote Arthur St. Clair, enclosing a copy of Jefferson's letter to Shelby. (See Am. St. Papers, 2d Ed., Vol. 2, p. 47.) St. Clair did not receive this letter until December 2d, 1793. Five days later (Dec. 7th, 1793) he issued his Proclamation.

2. With reference to the publication of George Rogers Clark's "Proposals" in the Kentucky Gazette of February 8th (not 4th), 1794, and which were introduced with the words "From the Centinel of the Northwestern Territory," attention is invited to the fact that Arthur St. Clair's Proclamation of December 7th, 1793, is published immediately below the above "Proposals." (See Ky. Gazette, Numb. XXI, Vol. VII, Saturday, 8th February, 1794.)

3. The Resolution referred to (at page 468, Miss. Valley Review), as having been adopted by the General Assembly of Kentucky on December 20, 1794, was really adopted at the legislative session of November-December, 1793, and,

ISAAC SHELBY AND THE GENET MISSION

of course, nearly a year before Thomas Pinckney was commissioned as Envoy to Madrid. The confusion results from a reference to this 1793 Resolution in the Resolution of November 12, 1794, calling on Governor Shelby for "such information as he may have received from the Senators of this State in Congress or from any department of the General Government, *on the subject of the above-mentioned resolution*," that is, the resolution of 1793. (Ms. Journal, House of Reps., of Ky., 1st Session, 3d Genl. Assembly, pp. 39-40; Wednesday, Nov. 12, 1794.) The Governor's Message of November 15, 1794, resulted.

4. The 1st Session of the 2d General Assembly of Kentucky was held in Frankfort, Ky., from 4th November, 1793, to 21st December, 1793, both inclusive. The original Ms. Journal of the House of Representatives, at page 1, opens with this recital:

"General Assembly begun and held for the State of Kentucky, at the house of Andrew Holmes, in the Town of Frankfort, on the Kentucky river, on Monday, the fourth day of November, in the year of our Lord, one thousand, seven hundred and ninety-three; and in the second year of the Commonwealth," etc.

Under date of Monday, December 16, 1793, at pages 145-146, of said House Journal, appears the following:

"A memorial of sundry Inhabitants of this Commonwealth, whose names are thereunto subscribed, was presented and read, setting forth the distressed situation, in which an arbitrary and unjust controul by a Foreign power of the navigation of the Mississippi, has placed the Citizens of this State, the feeble attempts, if any, which have been made by the Federal Government, to obtain it, the great tendency, the want of it has, to throw a damp on the industry of the present Inhabitants of our infant Country, to prevent the emigration of industrious Citizens from other parts, and requesting that the Legislature would take such measures, by instructing our Representatives in the Senate of the United States, and otherwise, to obtain the free use and navigation of that River; and also require from them, information of the measures, if any, which have been taken, by Government for that purpose.

A REVIEW BY SAMUEL M. WILSON

"Ordered, That the said memorial be referred to the Committee of Propositions and grievances, that they examine the matter thereof and report the same with their opinion thereupon to this House."

Under date of Friday, December 20th, 1793, at pages 167-168, of said House Journal, also appears the following:

"Mr. Crockett from the Committee of Propositions and grievances reported that the Committee had, according to order, taken into consideration the memorial of sundry Inhabitants of this State, respecting the free navigation of the River Mississippi, and come to the following resolution thereupon, which he delivered in at the Clerk's table, where it was twice read and agreed to by the House:

"Whereas, it appears to the General Assembly, that the free and uninterrupted navigation of the River Mississippi, is not only the natural, unalienable right of the Citizens of this Commonwealth, but that it has been acknowledged so to be by Solemn Treaty, and that it is the Duty of the Representatives of the People to assert, as much as is in their power, that right:

"Resolved, that the Senators of this State, in Congress, be and are hereby directed, to assert that right to the General Government, and demand an account of what measures have been taken, to obtain it, and to transmit such information, from time to time, to the Executive of this State, as they shall receive.

"Ordered that Mr. Crockett do carry the said Resolution to the Senate and desire their concurrence."

Under date of Friday, December 20th, 1793, at pages 173-174, of said House Journal, there appears the following entry:

"A message from the Senate by Mr. Caldwell.

"Mr. Speaker:

"The Senate concur in the resolution respecting the free navigation of the River Mississippi.

"And then he withdrew."

5. The 1st Session of the 3d General Assembly of Kentucky was held at the Capitol ("Public Buildings"), in

ISAAC SHELBY AND THE GENET MISSION

the Town of Frankfort, Ky., from 3rd November, 1794, to 20th December, 1794, both inclusive.

Under date of Wednesday, November 12, 1794, at pages 39-40, of the original Ms. Journal of the House of Representatives, appears the following:

"The house then, according to the standing orders of the day, resolved itself into a Committee of the Whole house on the State of the Commonwealth. Mr. McDowell was elected to the chair and after some time spent therein, Mr. Speaker (Robt. Breckinridge) resumed the Chair and Mr. McDowell reported that the Committee of the whole house has, according to order, taken into consideration the State of the Commonwealth, and has come to a resolution thereupon, which he delivered in at the Clerk's Table, where it was since read and agreed to by the house as follows:

"Whereas a Resolution passed the General Assembly at their last session, for instructing the Senators of this State, in the Senate of the United States, to assert the rights of the Citizens of this Commonwealth to the free and uninterrupted navigation of the Mississippi, and to demand an account of what measures have been taken to obtain it, and to transmit such information, as they shall receive, from time to time, to the Executive of this State, whereof it is probable, that the Governor of this State hath before this time received communications on this very interesting subject, Therefore,

"Resolved that the Governor be requested to lay before this house, such information as he may have received from the Senators of this State in Congress, or from any department of the General Government, on the subject of the above mentioned resolution."

"A message from the Senate by Mr. Johnson.

"Mr. Speaker:

"I am directed by the Senate to lay before this house sundry letters and papers, containing a correspondence between the Executive of this State and the Secretary of War. Also, an amendment proposed by Congress to the Federal Constitution, which have been communicated to the Senate by the Governor.— And he withdrew.

"Whereupon the said letters were read and ordered to lie on the table."

A REVIEW BY SAMUEL M. WILSON

Under date of Saturday, November 15th, 1794, at page 50, of said House Journal, there appears the following:

"The Speaker laid before the house a letter from the Governor with sundry letters and papers inclosed, containing a correspondence between the Executive of this State and the Secretary of the United States, which were read and ordered to lie on the table."

Under date of Saturday, December 20th, 1794, it is recorded in said House Journal, near the close thereof on a page not numbered, that "The Governor approved and signed a Resolution respecting the navigation of the Mississippi." But whether this entry has reference to the Resolution of December 20th, 1793, or to the Resolution of November 12, 1794, is not made clear, though it would appear to refer to the former resolution. Why the signing of the Resolution had been so long deferred by the Governor is also a matter of uncertainty, unless the formality had been inadvertently overlooked. He had certainly acted in obedience to the resolution.

6. In the Preface to Butler's History of Kentucky, the author says:

"In the complexion of many events, as well as the character of most of the early statesmen of Kentucky, this work differs from that of Mr. Marshall, wide as the poles. The public must determine between him and the author. Mr. Marshall enjoyed opportunities of contemporary intercourse and observation, which the author freely acknowledges have been unrivaled. Yet while sagacity and original information are fully and sincerely accorded to the primitive historian of Kentucky, the author's solemn convictions of historical duty extort his protest against the justice and impartiality of the representations of his competitors in public life. The author painfully feels the compulsion of making this declaration; much as he respects the talents and public services of Mr. Marshall, now silvered with venerable age. Yet he owes it to himself, he owes it to that posterity, who may feel curious to investigate the conduct of their ancestors, to declare, as he most solemnly does, his conviction that every man and party of men, who came into collision with Mr. Marshall or his friends, in the exciting and exasperating scenes of Kentucky story,

ISAAC SHELBY AND THE GENET MISSION

have been essentially and profoundly misrepresented by him, however unintentionally, and insensibly it may have been done. The contentions between this gentleman and his competitors for public honors, have been too fierce to admit of justice to the character of either, in each other's representations. These enmities have transformed his history into a *border feud*, recorded with all the embittered feelings of a chieftain of the marches. Yet his picturesque portraits of the pioneers of Kentucky, distinct from party influences, have ever given the author the utmost delight.

"But to have been opposed to Mr. H. Marshall in the political struggles of Kentucky, seems to have entailed on the actors, a sentence of conspiracy, and every dishonorable treachery. Our Shelby, Innes, Wilkinson, Messrs. John and James Brown, Nicholas, Murray, Thomas Todd, and John Breckinridge, have been thus unjustly denounced by Mr. Marshall. The author of this work, appeals from this sentence of an ancient antagonist, to a generation which has arisen, free in a great degree, from the excitements of the times in question."

7. The following Commission is owned by and now in the possession of William McMillan, Esq., of Paris, Ky., who is a grandson of Wm. McMillen, the officer named in the Commission, the original of which, in pen and ink, bears the well-known autograph of George Rogers Clark. This copy was made from the original by Samuel M. Wilson, on 6th July, 1920.

GEORGE ROGERS CLARK Major General in the Armies of France and Commander in chief of the French Revolutionary Legion of the Mississippi.

To William McMillen, Know you that by the special confidence &c. reposed in your Courage, Ability, Good Conduct & Fidelity; & by the power Invested in me by the Minister of FRANCE, I do appoint you Captain in the (Second-?) Battalion of the 2nd Regiment of Infantry to serve in an Expedition designed against the Spaniards of Louisiana & Floridas by order of Citizen Genet, Minister Plenipotentiary of the French Republic. All persons whom it may concern are requested to pay due Attention to you as such.

A REVIEW BY SAMUEL M. WILSON

Given under my hand at Louisville this ye. 9th day of
January, 1794, & in the 2nd year of the French Republic;
One and indivisible. G. R. Clark.

A similar commission to Captain Henry Lindsay, bearing date the 11th January, 1794, is in the Durrett Collection (University of Chicago Libraries), and another to Captain John Cochran, bearing date the 15th January, 1794, is in the Draper Collection (State Historical Society of Wisconsin), in the form of a newspaper reprint, crediting the original to Colonel R. T. Durrett's library, now owned by Chicago University. (See Am. Hist. Assoc. Report, 1896, Vol. 1, pp. 1033-1034.)

14 DAY USE
RETURN TO DESK FROM WHICH BORROWED
LOAN DEPT.

This book is due on the last date stamped below,
or on the date to which renewed. Renewals only:

Tel. No. 642-3405

Renewals may be made 4 days prior to date due.
Renewed books are subject to immediate recall.

REC'D LD JUN 12 73-10 AM 8 2

LD21A-20m-3,'73
(Q8677s10)476-A-31

General Library
University of California
Berkeley

MAY 16 1973
June 16 1973
LD 21-100n

500291

F455

S5 W5

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY

